

## ALPINE ACCIDENTS IN 1902.

'WHAT a great number of Alpine accidents have happened this summer!' 'I beg your pardon.' The assertion is repeated. 'I cannot agree with you.' 'What, have you not read of them in the newspapers week after week?' 'Yes, I have read many harrowing narratives, but what do you mean by an *accident*?' 'An unforeseen or unexpected event.' (Dictionaries will be found to agree with this statement.) 'Well, in the great majority of cases this definition will not apply. These catastrophes cannot be described as either "unforeseen" or "unexpected." Competent mountaineers would have foreseen most of these so-called accidents.' Such, or very like it, is the dialogue in which we have found ourselves taking part this summer on many occasions.

There is no denying that the weather has been treacherous—that sudden storms have been very prevalent, that the snow has been in many parts of the Alps in a dangerous state. But the modern mountaineer cannot wait. After days of bad weather comes a glorious morning; no time can be allowed for the mountain or pass to get into something like condition—a start must be made at once. The result is that an avalanche is started in some couloir or on some rapid slope, and a catastrophe ensues. Or when the weather is still threatening, in spite of warning from those who know the weather-signs of the district, a party insist on pressing on to slopes and icefields so vast that nothing but experience can teach their size. The storm descends, the cold is bitter, the mist hides everything; a disaster naturally follows. Or a climber ventures alone to climb a mountain of twelve or fourteen thousand feet, and is lost. What can be expected as the result of such wilful disregard of common precautions but sadly regrettable loss of life and harrowing details in the newspapers, followed in many cases by denunciatory vituperation of mountaineering, coupled with the name of the Alpine Club?

There is nothing new in this year's so-called accidents, and we do not propose to repeat here the criticisms which for many seasons past we have felt obliged to make in this Journal. We have denounced *ad nauseam* the disregard of the rules of sane mountaineering, which have caused the lamentable loss of so many lives. In lieu of a repetition of our previously expressed denunciations and exhortations we reproduce here a letter from Dr. Claude Wilson, which appeared in the 'Times' of August 23.

## ALPINE ACCIDENTS.

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. G. R. Fothergill, suggests, at the close of his admirable and graphic letter which appeared in your issue of to-day, that the primary cause of the recent deplorable accident on Mont Blanc may have been the extravagant charges demanded at the inn on the Grands Mulets; and he requests the opinion of some climber more experienced than himself.

You may receive communications on this point from those more fully

qualified than I to speak; and, if so, I trust you will not print this letter. But the point should not be left without reply; and perhaps the present is a fitting time for some comment upon Alpine accidents in general, from some one who knows and loves the manly sport of mountain climbing—who regretfully accepts the happily small death-roll which necessarily accompanies this, as every, sport; who deplores the needless 'butcher's bill' (the words are Sir Leslie Stephen's, anent Mont Blanc) which so greatly magnifies the fatal list; and who resents the false opprobrium which is thrown upon his favourite pursuit by the journalistic habit of including under the heading 'Alpine Accidents' mishaps which are not properly so termed.

To take the last point first. It is due chiefly to the fervour of the foreign correspondents of English newspapers, and their zeal to include under sensational headings everything that can be possibly so despatched, that the British public gets an exaggerated idea of the frequency of mountaineering accidents, and that as a consequence those who have friends or relations climbing in Switzerland are caused a very needless amount of anxiety. The sensationalism of some of our journals is probably allowed for by most readers; but, lest it may be thought that these remarks apply within only narrow or negligible limits, I refer you to your issue of the 13th inst., where the death of 'a tourist' and a 'farm-hand' in different Austrian valleys, each 'while looking for edelweiss,' are notified under the large-type heading of 'Fatal Alpine Accidents.'

Unfortunately, the number of Alpine accidents proper is not small; and that there is an increasing number of avoidable accidents no climber of experience will deny. Further, no mountaineer of experience who has spent some weeks within the last few years at any of the more popular mountaineering centres will wonder at the increased frequency of fatalities, but will rather marvel that the death-roll is not even heavier than it is. After a week of persistently bad weather, the sky at midday clears, and the same afternoon parties start out for huts in all directions; inexperienced amateurs—how inexperienced one can often see by their wholly unsuitable costumes—start out for the Jungfrau, or the Matterhorn, unaccompanied by guides; climbers of but a few years' standing engage guides of less experience than themselves; and tyros place themselves trustingly in the hands of alarmingly incompetent guides. Not infrequently the question of expense comes in, and this may militate in various ways. In a recent case a party of five novices, including two young girls, engaged two guides—two very poor ones—to take them up a much-crevassed snow mountain. That a like consideration may induce some parties to avoid the high charges at the Grands Mulets cannot be doubted. The point is one deserving of attention; and (as at the Concordia) a hut might be erected there as well as the 'hotel.' In any case, the Vallot refuge is unsuited both in nature and position to be used as a sleeping place for parties ascending Mont Blanc from Chamonix.

One last word as to the cause of this and other Alpine accidents. Nine out of ten are due to avoidable causes, and all these may be fairly bracketed as being 'usually due to bad guiding.' If 'economy,' in any of its aspects, is allowed to operate so as to become a source of danger, it may properly be included in this category. A good guide knows, or can easily gauge, his party. He may go singly with two or three amateurs, or he may very properly insist on having one good guide, or even in some cases two, for each. Certainly he will not risk himself and his party, nor will he allow himself to be so persuaded, by pushing on in bad or threatening weather late in the afternoon towards the Vallot hut. To

conclude, it is to bad mountaineering that most accidents are due—to bad guiding, whether by amateurs or guides. Certificated guides are plentiful, but 'good guides' are seldom easy to secure; and the danger of entrusting oneself to any others is much greater than is generally supposed.

I am, Sir, obediently yours.

Alpine Club, August 18.

CLAUDE WILSON.

The following account of the catastrophe on Mont Blanc, whereby two travellers and a guide lost their lives, is taken from a letter from Mr. G. R. Fothergill, which appeared in the 'Times' of August 18 :—

#### THE ACCIDENT ON MONT BLANC.

SIR,—Having seen in your issue of Wednesday a letter from Chamonix concerning the recent terrible accident on Mont Blanc, in which a certain amount of blame was thrown on my guides, and having read elsewhere many harrowing and often distorted reports of the same, I think that a short account of the whole matter, as I saw it, may help to dispel some doubts, and, what is more important, do something to prevent a recurrence of such accidents in the future.

Nine of us slept at the Grands Mulets on the night of Friday, August 8— a young German with two guides, myself with guide and porter, all of whom had come up from Chamonix, and two Germans (members of the Alpine Club), who with a guide had just attempted the ascent, but had been driven back by a storm of hail and snow from the Grand Plateau. The storm raged till midnight. At 1 and 2 a.m. black clouds were threatening, so that my guide did not call me till 3, and we started at 4. The young German and guides followed soon after; the others did not start till later. The sun rose about 5 o'clock, and the day was beautifully fine, the only traces of the storm being newly-fallen snow and hail, and avalanches on the Petit Plateau. We reached the Grand Plateau soon after 7, where we waited for a consultation with those behind to decide whether we should take the route to the right, by the Refuge Vallot and the Bosses du Dromadaire, or to the left, by the Petits Mulets, which is generally followed when the wind is very strong. It was decided to take the former; and we three went on, with the other party twenty or thirty yards behind. We had not gone more than sixty yards when we met two men coming down the mountain, looking haggard and ill, but not so weak as indescribably filthy, with their clothes torn, and with blood and ice on their faces and on their necks. We gave them brandy and some food, and they told us that they had been out all night, that they had been nearly frozen, and that their masters—two Frenchmen from Paris—were lying dead on the snow near the Dôme du Godter. Looking back on this meeting, and considering it apart from the knowledge of what afterwards happened, I can only wonder how it did not at once occur to us that our proper course was to forget the dead men till we had brought the living into safety. I cannot think that even my guides, though men of experience, can have realised how exhausted they were, or have allowed prejudices against strangers to influence them in a matter of life and death. I cannot help thinking that the shock of hearing that men were lying frozen on the snow somewhere up the mountain—coming as it did like a thunderclap, where everything was bright, the sun, the snow, the sky—drove thoughts of all else from our minds. At least we accepted their assurances that they could get down all right, and so certain was I of this that I felt considerable anxiety lest the news of the accident should be brought by them to Chamonix, and heard by my

parents in Geneva, before I could myself let them know of my safety ; and, indeed, when we got to the Bosses du Dromadaire my guide urged this as an argument for not proceeding to the summit ; but of this later.

We found the bodies of the Frenchmen, MM. J. C. Staehling and H. Mauduit, some 200 yards to the right of our route, almost behind the Dôme du Goûter, lying on the snow, stiff with ice, and about 20 yards apart, on what seemed to me the coldest part of the mountain, and some 400 yards from the Refuge Vallot, where they had intended to spend the night. One of the guides from the party behind us followed, and we carried the bodies under the shelter of a ridge. All around were foot-marks where they had all four wandered up and down till overcome with cold ; and a more pitiable sight cannot be imagined.

We went on to the Vallot hut, where the other guide rejoined his companions, and went on to the summit, and where also we met the two Germans and their guide, who had started later from the Grands Mulets. My guide, a strong man of the mountains, who had made the ascent some twenty times, and who had been up the Matterhorn and Jungfrau, while still in his teens, was as much shaken as myself. 'It makes me feel very bad,' he said ; and he expressed the feelings of us all.

We agreed that there was not time to go to the summit, as well as to bring the bodies down to Chamonix, my guide also suggesting that the guide and porter, whose names we afterwards found to be Blanc and Culet, would carry the news to Chamonix, and my parents would hear of the accident in Geneva.

So carrying carpets, we six left the Vallot hut, and having wrapped the bodies in them, and bound them with their own rope, we dragged them down through the snow. We reached the *côte* of the Petit Plateau in two hours, and there before us lay a huge crevasse. We had crossed in the morning by a snow-bridge, but the sun had weakened it, and the guides decided it would not bear the additional weight of the bodies. So we left them there side by side, with their axes upright in the snow to mark where they lay.

This was at midday. At 8 o'clock some one at Chamonix, looking through a telescope, had seen a man fall down a crevasse. This was either the guide Blanc or the porter Culet. The crevasse could not have been near the Dôme du Goûter, as your correspondent states, but must have been much lower down, not far from the Petit Plateau. Instantly nine guides left Chamonix to rescue him, and these we met soon after 1 o'clock below the Grands Mulets. They knew nothing of any other accident, and from them I learnt for the first time that Blanc and Culet had not got down safely to Chamonix. Both had fallen down a crevasse. Culet had been killed at once, but Blanc was rescued after a marvellous escape.

There can be no doubt that had we turned back with the guide and porter one more life would have been saved, and one less endangered. We were all undoubtedly to blame for not doing so—for inexperience is but a poor plea in such a case—but, as I have said before, I do not think that even my guides realised at the time how exhausted the men were and to what danger they were being exposed.

Such was the accident as I saw it, and an account of it will be valuable if it does anything to prevent such accidents in the future.

It is a caution against ascending Mont Blanc in anything but settled weather. On Friday the weather had been stormy for a week, and every day its summit had for some hours been hidden in dark clouds. The chief danger of Mont Blanc does not lie in its crevasses, its avalanches, its icy ridges, but it is none the less real for that. It lies in its sudden

storms, its icy cold, and the endless wanderings up and down its snowy slopes in search of the shelter which is never found. Its peaks and plateaux do not look very large in a picture; they do not look very large even from Chamonix; but its plains are vast, its slopes are long and wearying; it is the highest mountain in Europe.

There seemed to be also a feeling in Chamonix that the high charges at the Grands Mulets have a great deal to do with causing tourists to attempt to reach the Vallot hut in one day, often, as in this case, with fatal results. One night at the Grands Mulets cost me 55f., which, with the addition of 10f. at the Pierre Pointue, becomes a sum of some magnitude when one remembers that for an ascent of Mont Blanc the guide's tariff is 100f. and the porter's 50f.

Surely a charge of 12f. for one of two beds in a room is unnecessarily large! Large or small, however, there is little doubt that many have risked their lives in order to reach the Vallot hut in one day, while many more who have spent one night at the Grands Mulets have attempted the ascent the next morning in spite of impending bad weather, in order to avoid the expense of another night in the same place.

In the present case a night at the Grands Mulets would have saved three lives.

MM. Staehling and Mauduit crossed the Col de Géant and reached Chamonix at 6 p.m. on Thursday. They started for the Vallot hut and the summit of Mont Blanc at 4 a.m. the next morning. This I learnt from their landlady, who said she had hardly had an opportunity to speak to them, or she would have warned them of the danger of such an undertaking. They must have been tired when they reached Chamonix, and still more tired when they left the Grands Mulets at noon the next day; and then came the long weary climb over the soft afternoon snow, the long struggle against the hail and biting wind from the Petit Plateau upwards, the hopelessness of finding the hut as the darkness closed in, till at length they sank exhausted on the snow and succumbed to fatigue and exposure.

If they had not left the Grands Mulets they would not have lost their lives; or if they had turned back as their guide Blanc warned them, when they met the storm on the Petit Plateau, or even later. The guide of the Germans who came down in the storm from the Grand Plateau afterwards told my guide that he had seen this party of four through the storm just above the Grand Plateau; that he had shouted to them, but they had paid no heed. Of the folly of their behaviour there can be no two opinions, whether their guide knew the mountain, which many think doubtful, or not; but they are not the first who had sought and not found the Vallot hut, and the question whether the heavy charges at the Grands Mulets are not largely responsible is worth consideration. I should be glad to know the opinion on this point of some member of the English Alpine Club. Surely this evil, if evil it is, could be remedied by a combination of the members of the Alpine clubs, not of England only, but of all nations, for there were four on the mountain that morning. Mr. Whymper tells us that the huts at the Grands Mulets and at the Pierre Pointue are the property of the commune of Chamonix, that they are leased to private individuals, but that all charges are fixed by the commune. Chamonix is a village of hotels, and, as we know it, exists for and by its visitors, and the wishes of its most important visitors would surely carry considerable weight in a matter of this kind.

The transport of goods cannot be so very expensive, as mules can go half the distance, while the beds, which constitute the chief items on the bill, are fixtures; and no doubt any loss incurred by a reduction of prices

would be largely compensated for by an increase of visitors, if not to the Grands Mulets, at any rate, to the Pierre Pointue.

By such a change, however, Mont Blanc would be in no danger of being desecrated by tourist hordes. It is as hard to climb as when 'Balmat first trod its virgin snows.' As the guides of Chamonix say, 'Le Mont Blanc est toujours le Mont Blanc.'

I am your obedient servant.

Hôtel des Trois Rois à Bâle, August 15. GERALD R. FOTHERGILL.

#### THE ACCIDENTS ON WETTERHORN.

Two mountaineering disasters have taken place on the Wetterhorn, in the first of which (on August 16) Mr. J. H. Brown, of Ellon, Aberdeenshire, and the guide Knubel, of Zermatt, a son of the well-known guide Peter Knubel, lost their lives; in the second, the Rev. R. B. Fearon and his brother, Mr. H. C. D. Fearon, with the guides Samuel Brawand and Fritz Bohren, of Grindelwald, were struck by lightning on August 20. We extract the account of the former from a letter in the 'Times' of August 21 by the Rev. Canon McCormick, chaplain at Grindelwald for August.

Messrs. Brown and Garden spent some hours at the Wetterhorn hut, and started on their expedition soon after 2 A.M. on Saturday. The guide was Knubel, of Zernatt, and his companion was Imboden, of the same place, who, it appears, was not a full guide, though qualifying for the post. Mr. Garden had some experience, having made successful ascents last year of high mountains, including the Matterhorn. He and Mr. Brown were familiar with not a few of the rough Scotch mountains, which are not always easy to climb. The ascent was trying because of recent falls of snow. The upper couloir was particularly difficult. In the earlier part of the morning, when the snow retained some of the night's frost, progress was satisfactory, but as the sun melted it and it became soft and deep the climb was very fatiguing. However, in due time the summit was reached, and the view from it was magnificent. From the saddle down the upper couloir the quantity of soft snow made the descent rather trying, and it was not always very safe. There was the probability either of the party by their own weight starting an avalanche, or of their being caught in one. It is just possible that Grindelwald guides, who are familiar with the mountain in all its phases and moods, might have avoided the risk of accident by keeping at the side of the couloir, or by taking a longer and more circuitous route. It was the state of the snow and its quantity, and not the natural features of the mountain, which was the source of the greatest danger. Coming down the lower couloir there was no slight anxiety, and every effort was made to get out of it as soon as possible. Knubel suddenly shouted, 'It is coming,' and in an instant they were all caught in it and swept down the couloir with fearful rapidity. Imboden was first on the rope, Mr. Garden second, Mr. Brown third, and Knubel last. They were hurled hither and thither, and tumbled over again and again; and were blinded by snow, or threatened with suffocation. They were tossed about like a piece of wood in a mountain torrent. When the avalanche, after bearing them down by its resistless power over 1,200 ft., stopped, Knubel and Mr. Brown were a few feet above Mr. Garden, and Imboden about 15 ft. below, and the rope was cut to pieces even round Mr. Garden's waist; and knapsacks and ice-axes were all gone. After a moment or two Mr. Garden, more or less dazed by the terrible fall, rose to his feet, spoke to

Mr. Brown, and by shaking endeavoured to rouse him, but in vain. Knubel was gasping for breath, and Mr. Garden tried to pour some wine into his mouth, but it was too late, and in a few moments he died. He turned his attention next to Imboden, whose mind was wandering and who was crying aloud in mingled distress and fear, and he attempted to move him out of the bed of the avalanche, but was too weak to accomplish his purpose. He himself struggled to some rocks on his left, and on the chance, which was very remote, of attracting the attention of some one, he shouted again and again at the top of his voice for assistance.

Most providentially a foreign climber with his guide, who had come over the mountain from Rosenlaui, appeared on the rocks above, and after three-quarters of an hour reached Mr. Garden, who had previously rushed across the couloir to a place of safety, on the rocks to the right. They immediately went to the assistance of Imboden, and the guide carried him on his back to the side of Mr. Garden. They gave Mr. Garden to understand that they would hurry on and send up guides and succour, and shortly after he was left alone with two dead companions and with poor Imboden, who was quite off his head, alone for hour after hour—from 2 to 10 P.M. The evening closed in; the heavens became black with portentous clouds. Presently hail pelted furiously. The cold was intense. The moonlight tried to struggle through the darkness, but receded again immediately. No sound broke the solitude, except the piteous wailings of the half-demented Imboden. The lightning flashed and made everything around look ghastly. It was no dream, no nightmare, but stern reality, and those hours of indescribable misery moved with the slowness of a lifetime. . . .

Succour came at length. Guides carried the living and the dead, with a skill and tenderness which always characterise them. From the hut Mr. Garden walked supported on either side by guides, and with all his pains and bruises this must have been no easy task. Nature gave no relief to the gloom. It poured in torrents. It was Sunday morning, and, leaving my services to the Rev. Walter Ditchfield, I went to meet the relief party. First came the guides carrying the remains of poor Knubel in a hammock. Next I met Mr. Garden, limping and weary, presenting some marks of his terrible tumble, more anxious to hide himself than to be seen by curious eyes, but welcoming me as friend and chaplain to whom he could open his heart in his trouble. Tramp, tramp, came the bearers of the dead, and respect and reverence marked those who awaited the arrival of the sad cavalcade. A carriage took us back from the Wetterhorn Hotel, and, as Mr. Garden very naturally disliked the idea of a public entrance into the Bear Hotel, we quietly slipped into the office of the Brothers Boss. The remains of Mr. Brown are to be taken to his home in Scotland, and those of Knubel to Zermatt. For the latter's widow collections have been made in the chief hotels, and I trust that the Alpine Club may, in its generosity, lend its aid.\* It is impossible to speak too highly of the sympathy manifested in all directions for those who have suffered through this terrible disaster, or of the delicacy, tact, thoughtfulness, and generosity of the proprietors of the Bear Hotel. I may add that Mr. Brown was a banker, of Ellon, Aberdeenshire, and Mr. Garden is a Scotch advocate, of Aberdeen.

In another letter to the 'Times' (it appeared on August 26) Canon McCormick gives the narrative of Mr. F. W. Bourdillon, a

---

\* See p. 286 of the present number.

member of the Alpine Club, who took part in the search for the bodies. Mr. Bourdillon says that he found himself one of a

party of guides and porters, nearly 40 strong, which left Grindelwald about 10 o'clock on Thursday evening. We reached the Gleckstein hut about 1 o'clock, the moon being so bright that, in spite of cloud, we went all the way without lanterns. At the hut we found the two guides who had gone up earlier to look for any traces of the missing party. They had been unable to search the Krinne glacier owing to the cloud and the darkness. But they reported having found no traces as far as they had gone; and I saw that the guides now practically gave up hope. 'Either a stone or lightning,' said one of them, brother of Fritz Bohren, who was killed. After climbing for some time after leaving the hut we found ourselves above the clouds, which lay in a white sea of rolling mist below us, like a fog-bank. The moon was brilliant, the sky blue-black, and the snows all round gleamed like silver. We searched the Krinne Firn, below the two dreaded couloirs, but found nothing. Then there was a long wait. We were on the steep slope of the glacier, and I suggested fixing our ice-axes in the ice, and so supporting one of the long poles carried up by some of the men, so as to make a seat. But the guides preferred standing, in case of stones falling from above. Thus we had to wait in the cold, bright moonlight for some  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hr., till about 5 o'clock, when the daylight grew strong enough to allow the party to ascend the rocks. The numbers made the climbing very slow. But a small division had gone ahead, and when they reached the saddle they shouted to us below to announce that they had found signs of the missing caravan, and on reaching the snow saddle, bathed in the sunlight of a cloudless Alpine morning, we learned that a hat had been discovered; and there were also signs of a vast fall of snow and ice from the very top of the Wetterhorn. Looking up we could see the cornice which crowned it all broken and notched. At first it was thought that the bodies had probably fallen on to the glacier thousands of feet below, on the other side from Grindelwald, the Schwarzwald Firn. But presently, high up on the snow, but just below the top, was made out the dark form of a human body, lying stretched on the steep snow-slope. A small party at once began the climb to it. The slope was steep and the snow not good, so that steps had to be cut all the way, and almost every member of the party had to clear each step afresh for his own footing. Then a shout announced that another body had been discovered, roped to the first, each balancing the other on either side of a slight kind of buttress which runs out from the snow-slope. The one first seen was the guide Brawand, or Brawant as some spell it; the other was the Rev. Robert Burton Fearon. Both were frozen into the snow, and partly covered with it (they must have been dead about 48 hrs.) Brawand was marked by the lightning, struck on one side, all down one arm, across his body (probably owing to his watch-chain), and down the other leg. Mr. Fearon also bore marks of the lightning, but less strongly. On the very top of the mountain Brawand's ice-axe was discovered upright in the snow, split and scorched by lightning. The two bodies were wrapped separately, and slid reverently, but with difficulty, down the steep snow, the whole party being roped and having to mind every footstep. When they arrived down on the Sattel I saw the most touching sight in the world—strong, courageous men, many of them relations, weeping like children, some even sobbing aloud. There was no delay. A party was told off to take the bodies down the easier side of the mountain to Rosenlani, while the most experienced of the guides searched for the two remaining bodies. I came down the other way with two of the guides, as fast as we could go, to tell the sad news in Grindelwald.



## ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE GRINDELWALD DISASTERS.

The Editor of the 'Alpine Journal' has been good enough to ask me if I care to add anything to my account quoted from the 'Times'; and I gladly avail myself of his suggestion, as that account was never intended for a description of the accident, but was merely a narrative of the first search, which resulted in settling decisively both the fact of the accident and its nature, and in the discovery of two of the bodies. It was also written, as is at once evident, for the general public, and not for readers of the 'Alpine Journal.'

I had taken a chalet (Fritz Bohren's) at Grindelwald for the whole summer, and had looked forward to a good deal of climbing. Unfortunately, after the first three or four weeks of our stay, the weather became very much broken, and remained quite unsettled the rest of our time, fine days and wet coming indiscriminately, with no long spell of bad weather nor of good. The result was that all long expeditions became doubtful, and to do any serious climbing it was necessary to run more risk, in weather and bad conditions of the mountains, than is—as the Editor remarks above—in general advisable. Of course, there were a good many successful climbs made, some of them enjoyable, some of them the reverse. The lucky arranged their climbs for days which proved fine, the unlucky for those when the weather changed. Also, there were failures and turnings back, even from the Wetterhorn. The day before the first accident I met a party at the upper couloir, whose guides were deliberately bringing them back ἀπρακτοι, the snow above being, as they said, 'like sawdust.' The two climbers looked as unhappy and injured as men do when turned back from their climb, but I thought next day they must have felt consoled, if not thankful. The mountain was in an unusually bad condition for the middle of August, a quantity of fresh snow having fallen two days before. Still, the next day's climbers seem to have had a safe and enjoyable climb, and to have run no imprudent risk, except, perhaps, as Canon McCormick suggests, in venturing to cross the avalanche-tracks so late on such a hot day, with so much snow above them. But few climbers, I think, would not have done the same under the same circumstances, neither of the two couloirs being of any great width.

The weather for a day or two after this, with the exception of heavy rain that night, was better, and the fresh snow had mostly disappeared when, on Tuesday, August 19, the brothers Fearon left, with Samuel Brawand and Fritz Bohren, to sleep in the Gleckstein Hut. (Both guides, I believe, had that very morning joined in the procession that escorted the body of Mr. Brown to the station, to be taken to England.) Other climbs were being arranged, and there certainly seemed every prospect of a safe and easy ascent of the Wetterhorn. In the night, however, there was a heavy thunderstorm, but this passed off, and the weather at the hut must have seemed promising enough to the party to allow them

to start. About 9 o'clock in the morning another storm came on, with great blackness and heavy rain, which lasted all the morning. The storm was particularly heavy over the Wetterhorn. Our chalet was nearer the mountain than Grindelwald itself, and my own impression was that the storm was a bad one. Others at Grindelwald, however, only remembered noticing one or two claps of thunder. Anyhow, it was in this storm that the party on the top of the Wetterhorn were killed. (Brawand's watch had stopped at 11 o'clock, I was told.) When the party did not return that evening, as expected, some uneasiness was felt, but it was thought probable they had been turned back by the weather, and were sleeping a second night at the hut, to try again next morning. But as the next day wore away and still no news came the anxiety increased. In the afternoon two guides were despatched to the hut, and in the evening the full search party started, as described above.

The accident is, I believe, almost unique in its cause, and it is a curious fact that Mr. H. C. D. Fearon had taken considerable interest in electrical matters, and was (the *Electrician* of August 29 remarked) one of the Factory Inspectors who spoke at the Institution of Electrical Engineers in the recent discussion on the new Factory Act and the dangers from electric shock. He would, therefore, have fully realised the danger of keeping the ice-axes in the hand in such a storm, and probably advised their being laid down. Brawand—whose ice-axe was struck—appears to have been the only one of the party who had hold of his ice-axe at the time, and even this, of course, is not certain.

In spite of unwearied searching by the guides day after day, on every side of the mountain, with much dangerous climbing and laborious digging in the snow, till all Grindelwald feared there would be a fresh disaster, the bodies of Mr. H. C. D. Fearon and Fritz Bohren were not discovered till September 22, when Fritz's brother Gottfried (who had hardly rested from the search since the accident) found them in the upper couloir, about twenty-five yards above the spot where the avalanche had overtaken the former party. They had been so thickly covered with snow that the search parties must have passed and repassed the spot many times without seeing them. They were both terribly knocked about, having fallen a great distance among the rocks.

In this accident, at all events, there seems to have been no incautious running into danger. To find oneself in a bad thunderstorm must have happened to every mountaineer; and in all other respects the mountain was in better condition than it had been for some time. Both guides were well-known and personally popular. Samuel Brawand was the better known and the more experienced guide. Fritz Bohren spoke no English, and had done little climbing with English climbers; but he was one of the pleasantest of men, a simple, happy, affectionate young fellow, of whom it is impossible to me to write without a feeling of personal loss and sorrow.

F. W. BOURDILLON.

## OTHER ACCIDENTS.

We do not propose to give an exhaustive list of this season's accidents, but we may briefly mention three deaths which befell travellers when climbing alone. On July 8 Herr Closs, after climbing the Cimon della Pala, was overtaken by an avalanche on his way down; on August 18 Dr. Largin, of Bern, perished on the Nadelhorn; on August 28 M. Emile Dunant, of Geneva, was killed on the Mont Pleureur, after successfully accomplishing the ascent.

## NEW EXPEDITIONS IN 1902.

*Eastern Graians.*

COLLE FIORITO (*circa* 10,900 ft.). August 13.—Mr. G. Yeld, with François and Sylvain Pession, of Valtournanche, left Cogne at 6.15 A.M., and, having reached the Arpisson chalets by the usual route, went up the Arpisson glen to a col between the Tour d'Arpisson and the Punta Garin. The col was reached at 12.50 P.M., much time having been spent in halts. The col is named from the Fiorito torrent of the Italian Government map. The little peak to the E. of the col was climbed, and a fine view of the Valnontey enjoyed from it. The party having descended into the Luzert glen returned to Cogne by the Grauson huts and the Grauson track.

*Mont Blanc District.*

COMPLETE TRAVERSE OF THE AIGUILLE SANS NOM (3,989 mètres = 13,088 feet) and AIGUILLE VERTE (4,127 mètres = 13,541 feet). August 24.—Messrs. R. W. Broadrick and A. E. Field, with Joseph Ravel and Joseph Démarchi, left the usual Dru gîte on the Charpoua glacier at 12.2 A.M. They proceeded up the glacier, which was in good condition, and after an hour the moonlight enabled them to extinguish the lanterns. At 1.30 they took to the rocks of the Aiguille Sans Nom, and climbed up broken rocks and a simple chimney on to the S.W. ridge, which was followed up easier and more broken rocks till it became very narrow, when they traversed a short snow-slope on to rocks again. They followed these rocks round the big snow-slope to a point about the middle of the face where the rocks steepen and form the great wall of the peak. They then ascended a depression forming the channel of a small stream, which brought them to easy rocks, followed by a short snow-slope. Above this they climbed a very steep couloir about 10 ft. wide, which was rendered extremely difficult by being coated with verglas. At the top of this the leader traversed round an awkward corner to the right, taking a shoulder, and then went up snow to easier rocks. The others then climbed straight up, this way being difficult enough, but probably better because clearer of verglas. A divergence to the left up simpler rocks led to the ridge again, where at 6.0 they halted 25 minutes for breakfast.